

# ***CITY COUNCIL***

## ***Open Government, Rules & Intergovernmental Relations***

**Monday, August 6, 2012  
5:00 pm  
City Council Office**

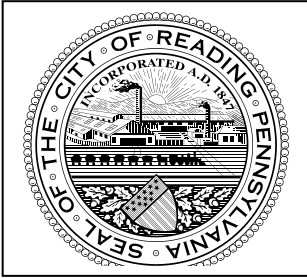
The Open Government, Rules and Intergovernmental Relations Committee's responsibilities includes Permanent Rules of Council, City Charter, Administrative Code, Intergovernmental Relations, Act 47, Accuracy of Government Information and Communications, Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government Services.

**Committee Members:** Dennis Sterner (Chair), M. Donna Reed (Vice-Chair) and Stratton Marmarou

*Although Council committee meetings are open to the public, public comment is not permitted at Council Committee meetings. However, citizens are encouraged to attend and observe the meetings. Comment from citizens or professionals during the meeting may be solicited on agenda topics via invitation by the Committee Chair.*

*All electronic recording devices must be located at the entry door in all meeting rooms and offices, as per Bill No. 7-2012*

- I. Update Welcome to Reading Guidebook**
- II. Ethics Training & Review**
- III. Communications Policy**



# CITY COUNCIL

## **Open Government, Rules & Intergovernmental Relations Committee**

**Monday, July 2, 2012  
Meeting Report**

**Attendance:** D. Reed, S. Marmarou, D. Sterner Chair

**Others Attending:** S. Katzenmoyer, L. Murin

The meeting was called to order at 5:04 pm by Mr. Sterner.

### **I. Update on New Website to be Released Summer of 2012**

Mr. Murin reported that the updated website will be public in September.

Mr. Sterner questioned what would be changing. Mr. Murin stated that he did not know as Mr. Drabinsky was working on this project. He stated that he will send a link for the website to Council.

Mr. Marmarou noted the need for an updated Welcome to Reading Guidebook. He stated that the guidebook contains important information. Mr. Murin noted that the cost of update and publication may be prohibitive. Ms. Reed stated that there were sponsors and volunteers who worked on the guidebook in the past.

Mr. Murin stated that this information is constantly changing. He suggested that residents refer to the website. Mr. Marmarou stated that not all residents have access to the internet.

Mr. Sterner expressed his belief that this update should occur. Mr. Murin stated that he has sent a memo to Mick Dee requesting that this topic be discussed at the next staff meeting.

Ms. Reed stated that the Mayor's office, BCTV and volunteers worked on the guidebook in the past at no cost to the City.

Mr. Sterner requested a follow up on these topics at the next meeting.

## **II. Open & Transparent Government (ICC)**

### **1. ICC Implementation and Reports**

Mr. Sterner stated that Council receives and reviews summaries of all meetings.

Mr. Murin stated that there is good attendance at meetings. He stated that the meetings will be held every other week during the summer months.

Mr. Murin stated that the Mayor and Scott Hoh have met with the District Attorney to restart discussions of regional cooperative law enforcement efforts. He stated that the first discussions will be regarding evidence technicians.

Mr. Murin stated that moving the evidence technicians to the County was a concern for the Chief in the past. He noted that the Chief did not want to lose control of evidence. He stated that there may also have been FOP issues with the transfer of work. He noted the need to find a way to work around the FOP issue. He stated that there would be four positions affected at approximately \$100,000 each.

Mr. Sterner stated that the Chief may still not want to lose control of the evidence. Mr. Murin noted the need to begin discussions with the Chief on this issue. He questioned not following the advice of the Chief.

Mr. Marmarou noted the problems created with chain of evidence if too many people have access. He stated that this may also cause an increase in court hearings for officers.

Mr. Murin stated that these are ongoing discussions.

### **2. Ethics Training and Review**

Mr. Murin stated that the Law office is developing an ethics training program. He stated that the timeline for the program is unknown as there are other priorities.

Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that she has contacted the chair of the Charter Board regarding this issue. She stated that the Charter Board is planning educational sessions for newly elected officials and appointed directors/managers in late summer/early fall. She stated that the Charter Board sessions also include the Board of Ethics and the Ethics Code. She stated that the Board of Ethics worked with HR in the past for training for all employees.

Mr. Murin noted the need to work together on this issue. He stated that HR should be coordinating these efforts.

Mr. Sterner requested additional follow up on this topic at the next meeting.

### 3. Communications Policy

Mr. Murin stated that the memo states that all requests be sent to the Mayor's office while there is no Managing Director on staff.

Mr. Sterner stated that Council has heard that employees are afraid to speak with Council staff. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that the perception is that no one can speak with Council staff based on the memo.

Mr. Murin stated that Council staff can receive information that is routine or is public information only. He stated that Council is legislative only. He stated that an invitation to Administrative staff regarding attending meetings is the issue that resurrected the Communications Policy. He stated that staff must be prepared to make presentations at meetings. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that it was routine in the past for Council staff to invite Administrative staff to meetings based on Council agenda topics. She noted the need for the policy to be more specific if Mr. Murin believes that employees are misinterpreting it.

Mr. Sterner stated that Council depends on their staff to get them information and to handle constituent issues. He stated that Council staff has had problems in assisting Council since the Communications Policy was put in place. Mr. Murin noted the need for a centralized area that knows all concerns of Council and citizens.

Ms. Katzenmoyer explained the delays when Council staff must go through a long chain of command for items which were considered routine in the past but which are now required to go through the Mayor's office. Mr. Murin suggested that Council staff draft a memo outlining their specific concerns.

Mr. Marmarou stated that he does not support the Communications Policy. He stated that it is preventing Council from obtaining information. Mr. Murin stated that the goal of this policy was not to stop the flow of information or stop people from talking to one another. He stated that routine requests may be made directly to staff. Ms. Katzenmoyer again stated that routine needs to be better defined as routine requests may not be for information that is public.

Mr. Murin stated that the new Managing Director will bring her own style and approach to this issue. He stated that the policy may be changing and that the Administration has delayed several important decisions until the Managing Director begins working full time.

Mr. Sterner suggested that Council staff draft a memo and that Council staff and Mayor's staff meet to discuss the issues.

Mr. Murin stated that there are many administrative policies. He questioned if they would be addressed during the Recodification process. Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that they would not be unless they are included in the Administrative Code. She explained the Recodification process.

Mr. Sterner questioned who should track and maintain administrative policies. Ms. Katzenmoyer suggested that this be a function of HR.

Mr. Sterner expressed his belief that this friction cannot continue.

Mr. Murin stated that he is anxious for Ms. Snyder to begin. He stated that Niki Oxendine from HR is anxious to meet with Council. He requested that she be added to a Committee of the Whole or Work Session agenda in the coming weeks.

The Open Government, Rules, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee adjourned at 6:38 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by,  
*Shelly Katzenmoyer*,  
Deputy City Clerk



VAUGHN D. SPENCER  
MAYOR

## CITY OF READING, PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
ROOM 2-33  
815 WASHINGTON STREET  
READING, PA 19601  
(610) 655-6234

To: ALL City Employees

From: Mayor Vaughn Spencer

Subject: Communications with Council Members and City Clerk

I have notified Council and the City Clerk that all requests for any information or action from any City employee on any matter directly relating to the employee's job function, with the exception of those directed to the Law Department, must be made through the Mayor in his functional capacity as Managing Director

For those employees classified as managerial or confidential, the protocol established here shall extend to requests for opinions on policy or administrative matters.

This protocol is not new and does not constitute a change in policy. This same process was in place under the previous administration. This directive serves as affirmation and clarification.

Any City employee who receives a request such as outlined above should courteously decline to comply and suggest that the request be directed to the Mayor. The employee shall immediately report the request in writing to the Mayor with copies to his/her immediate supervisor.

Certain exceptions may be necessary when the issue relates to activity protected by state or federal law, including but not limited to PA Acts 111 and 195. These exceptions will be made on a case by case basis.

This policy specifically excludes routine requests for information or answers to questions which would normally be provided to the public.

Violations of this directive will result in disciplinary action, the severity of which will be assessed relative to the consequences and impact of the violation. This could include suspension or discharge.

***(Reference Sections 308 (g), (h) and (i) of the Home Rule Charter)***



FAX: (610) 655-6427 TDD: (610) 655-6442



## CITY OF READING, PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
ROOM 2-33  
815 WASHINGTON STREET  
READING, PA 19601  
(610) 655-6234

**VAUGHN D. SPENCER**  
MAYOR

May 22, 2012

Linda,

Any requests for any City personnel, excluding Law Department, to attend Council Meetings or workshops must be made through my office via email. The request should be made no later than the preceding Wednesday by 5 PM and should be accompanied by a statement of the issue. Urgent matters which arise after the deadline will be decided on a case by case basis.

Thank you for your continuing cooperation in these matters.

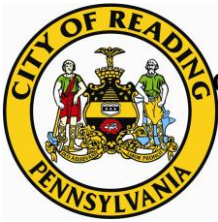
Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Vaughn D. Spencer", is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Vaughn D. Spencer,  
Mayor, City of Reading



FAX: (610) 655-6427 TDD: (610) 655-6442



## M E M O R A N D U M

**TO:** Larry Murin, Special Assist to Mayor  
**FROM:** Shelly Katzenmoyer, Deputy City Clerk  
**DATE:** August 2, 2012  
**SUBJECT:** Communication and Council Agenda Policies

As requested at the July 2, 2012 Open Government, Rules, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee meeting, this memo will serve to start the conversation on the need to modify the current Communication Policy.

Council staff was aware of the Communication Policy as set forth by former Mayor McMahon regarding protocol for requests and the flow of information through the Managing Director's office. The need to direct all information through one office as a "middle man" slowed down the lines of communication when trying to assist citizens. Former Managing Director Carl Geffken applied exceptions to routine requests. The current Administration notified Council and Council Staff that they intended to continue this policy.

On May 22, 2012, an updated Communication Policy Memo was distributed to all City employees reminding them of the policy and directing Council and Council staff to make all inquiries through the Mayor's office in the absence of the Managing Director. This memo excludes routine requests and public information but also threatens suspension and discharge of employees for violation of the Policy. This revised policy does not define what "routine" is.

Further discussion on the issue is needed to alleviate these misunderstandings and to eliminate the fear that employees will be terminated or disciplined for speaking to Council staff for any reason. Council staff shares Administrative employees' concern that their speaking, even socially, to other employees puts those employees at risk of discipline or termination.



Council agenda topics are based on Council and Administrative requests and Act 47 Initiatives. In the past, the Managing Director's Administrative Assistant scheduled staff upon review of the draft agendas.

The memo addressing the scheduling of Administrative staff at Council meetings was also issued on May 22, 2012 stating that Council staff should no longer contact Administrative staff to attend Council meetings and advising that agendas are to be sent to the Mayor's office no later than the Wednesday prior to the meeting so that appropriate staff could be scheduled to attend. However, the Mayor's staff did not follow up with Administrative staff or communicate with Council Staff leaving many issues unaddressed.

Items which were considered routine in the past included:

- Informing Directors about agenda topics by emailing draft agendas directly to them, especially Committee meetings which have specific, recurring topics and relate to specific Departments and offices
- Codes Court Case Log to disseminate to Councilors and to assist Council staff in their search for unpermitted rental housing
- Sharing information on Rental Housing research
- Solicitation Permits issued by the Police Chief
- Submitting information to IT for posting on the City's website
- Requests for Commendation acceptance at Council meetings
- Requests for information including:
  - Street sweeping schedule
  - Grass cutting schedule
  - Background checks for BAC applicants
- Participation and leadership in Greenbelt projects
- Other items were granted permission on a case by case basis by the Managing Director depending on the project

Another item which needs to be addressed is citizen complaints. Many times citizens call the Council office to report neighborhood issues after they call other offices and do not see any progress or receive return phone calls. Currently, all complaints need to be sent to the Managing Director's office to be forwarded to the

Services Center. The SR number is then sent to the Managing Director's office who forwards the information to the Council staff. Follow ups are handled in the same way – requests are sent to the Managing Director's office for forwarding to the Services Center who sends updates to the Managing Director's office to be forwarded to Council staff. Both are overly complicated and inefficient as the public is able to communicate directly with the Call Center. Council and Council staff should have the same ability to contact the CSC without involving the Managing Director.

Prior to Mr. Geffken's Communication Policy, Council staff was able to obtain resolution of 94% of constituent complaints when direct contact with Administrative offices with a copy to the Managing Director was permitted. The communication policies past and present reduced that resolution rate to 67% in 2010 and 70% in 2011. We are currently at 55% for 2012.

Council staff and the Administration should work together for Reading's government and Reading's residents. We ask you to consider eliminating this cumbersome and inefficient policy and allow Council staff to work directly with the Administrative offices with copies sent to the Managing Director.

Cc: City Council  
City Clerk  
Managing Director